

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

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USDEL MBFR VIENNA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 126717

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PARM, NATO, MBFR

SUBJECT: NATO SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE: UK PROPOSAL ON MBFR

REFS:

(A) USNATO 5056 (DTG 191426Z MAY 78);
(B) USNATO 5084 (DTG 191830Z MAY 78)

1. YOU SHOULD BE GUIDED BY FOLLOWING POINTS IN
FURTHER DISCUSSION OF DAVID OWEN IDEA FOR A REFERENCE
TO AN MBFR FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING IN THE SUMMIT

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COMMUNIQUE.

-- WE CAN AGREE IN PRINCIPLE WITH THE BRITISH SUGGESTION.
(FYI. WE WOULD NOT WANT TO TAKE THE LEAD IN COUNTERING
OPPOSITION TO IT FROM THE BELGIANS OR OTHERS. END FYI.)

-- WE THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT NO TIME BE SET FOR

SUCH A MEETING, SO THAT WE RETAIN FLEXIBILITY AND CONTROL OVER ITS SCHEDULING. WE DO NOT WANT TO BE BOXED IN.

-- WE THINK IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO REFER TO IT AS A "MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS," RATHER THAN "CONVENING THE NEGOTIATIONS AT FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL." LATTER FORMULATION COULD GENERATE PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS THAT ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE FULFILLED IN THE SHORT RUN, AND COULD IMPLY A FULL MBFR ROUND AT THAT LEVEL.

-- WE FULLY AGREE THAT WE WANT TO MAKE THE MEETING CONDITIONAL UPON GENUINE PROGRESS IN THE TALKS. THE SOVIETS SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, BE ABLE TO PORTRAY THE OFFER AS AN ULTIMATUM, AND WE SHOULD NOT WORD THE OFFER IN A WAY THAT ENCOURAGES PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE CRITERIA FOR THE MEETING. WE THUS SEE SOME MERIT IN CALLING

FOR SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS TO PRECEDE A FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING, AND SPECIFYING PRIVATELY TO THE SOVIETS THAT BY THIS PHRASE WE MEAN BOTH A CONSTRUCTIVE EASTERN RESPONSE TO THE INITIATIVE, AND STEPS BY THE EAST LEADING TO REAL PROGRESS IN RESOLVING DIFFERENCES ON THE DATA PROBLEM.

-- CONVERSATION WITH FRG ARMS CONTROL COMMISSIONER
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RUTH IN WASHINGTON MAY 12 INDICATES THAT FRG MAY ARGUE FOR SETTING COMPLETE AGREEMENT ON MANPOWER DATA AS A PRECONDITION FOR HOLDING FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING. IF FRG REPS TAKE THIS LINE, YOU SHOULD WORK FOR COMPROMISE THAT WOULD USE THE OWEN IDEA TO PROD THE SOVIETS TO MOVE ON THE DATA ISSUE, BUT NOT REQUIRE COMPLETE AGREEMENT AS A PRECONDITION. YOU SHOULD NOTE THAT IN ANY CASE, A DECISION AS TO THE ADEQUACY OF PROGRESS WOULD BE LEFT TO ALLIED JUDGMENT.

-- THE SOVIETS ARE MORE LIKELY TO TAKE THE OFFER SERIOUSLY IF THEY ARE INFORMED OF THE NATO STATEMENT PRIVATELY, JUST BEFORE IT IS MADE PUBLIC. ONE OF THE ALLIES COULD DO THIS AHEAD OF TIME -- THE BRITISH, AS AUTHOR OF THE PROPOSAL, MIGHT BE THE MOST APPROPRIATE ALLY TO TAKE THIS ON.

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